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Kentucky Department of Agriculture
A Consumer Protection And Service Agency

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM – KY-FD-IM-S-06-06

TO: Food Service Directors / Administrators

FROM: Teresa Ulery, Director
Division of Food Distribution

DATE: March 23, 2006

SUBJECT: Changes to the Commodity Fact Sheets

USDA conducted a Commodity Fact Sheets survey in the fall of 2005. They received feedback from many State Agencies and Food Service Directors expressing comments, ideas, and suggestions on ways to improve the commodity fact sheets. These were very valuable in helping to determine USDA's next steps with regarding to updating them. We would like to take this opportunity to convey some common concerns expressed.

Commodity Codes - Several requests ask that the commodity code be placed on the fact sheets to help clearly identify each commodity item. Good news! USDA is in the process of working with technical staff to update and redesign the current online commodity fact database that will include a number of new features, including the addition of the commodity codes to the fact sheets. However, in the interim until this project is finished, USDA will be working on a special report that will add the commodity codes on the current school fact sheets. We will notify you when this report is completed and the fact sheets with the codes are posted on the food distribution web site.

Nutrition Facts Panel - USDA received comments suggesting the nutrition information should include the same nutrient commonly found on commercial labels such as *trans*-fat, % calories from fat, etc.

After reassessing this matter further, USDA will be including five new nutrients on the facts sheets – grams of *trans*-fat, potassium, magnesium, vitamin E, and sugar.



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As you may be aware, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has published a final rule mandating, as of January 1, 2006, manufacturers list *trans* fatty acids or *trans*-fats on the Nutrition Facts panel of conventional foods. However, FDA realizes this will not be an overnight process and may take up to a year. During this grace period, USDA will be working closely with manufacturers as well as their sister agencies, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA), to help determine which of our commodities have *trans*-fats.

Ingredients List - Many FSD state the importance of having the ingredients list of each commodity readily available on the fact sheet as a possible improvement. It is impracticable for USDA to include ingredients on the fact sheets. Ingredients for many of the commodities may vary from vendor to vendor. Although, USDA has certain product specification requirements, they do not regulate every ingredient which is needed to make the item. Therefore, depending upon which vendor is awarded the contract the ingredients could drastically vary and would be inaccurate on the fact sheet.

Allergens - Like the ingredients list, USDA received concerns about listing potential allergens on the fact sheet. This information will need to come from the vendor which is now required to be included on the label. Starting, January 1, 2006 manufacturers are also being required to list the eight major food allergens (milk, eggs, fish, wheat, tree nuts, peanuts, soybeans and crustaceans) on their labels. However, there is an 18-month window before this requirement has to be met by the manufacturers. During this time period, USDA recommends for any product in question they you read the commodity package insert or call the manufacturers directly to obtain more information on potential allergens.

Graphics - Many of you indicated the addition of graphics would be helpful. USDA has already begun working internally to help facilitate this process. USDA hopes that their designers can help to display a graphic that will help identify the food commodity, the food band from where the commodity is associated with from MyPyramid.gov

USDA and this office appreciated your involvement and participation in the survey on commodity fact sheets. Should you have questions or more suggestions on how to improve the commodity fact sheets, please inform this office and we will forward your comments to USDA.

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